

## REACTION TO THE FRENCH COLONIZATION OFINDO-CHINA

get at the exact figures since both sides obviously exaggerate.

The communists claim that for the murder of six French soldiers two years of terror spread over twenty million people. Thousands were killed and still more thousands languish in prison. Official figures total the executions at less than a score, and state that subsequent measures of clemency have virtually emptied the prisons. The present Minister of the Colonies, Moutet, in 1936 examined the cases of 1,871 political prisoners and 68-25 Per cent were granted commutations of sentence.

The two penitentiaries of the colony enjoy a sinister reputation because of the frightful lack of hygiene and care. Thirty of the 200 political prisoners sent to Son La prison in February, 1933, died within less than a year.

Though many communist leaders escaped abroad, calm was restored by 1932. That same year an attempt to reconstitute the party failed, as it did again some months later. The most recent tracts which have been found show a slight change in attitude. They advocate less violence because in the past it has facilitated police investigations. They are now more prudent; both from the viewpoint of self-preservation and the desire to establish connections with Moscow, which has consistently

disapproved of their violence. The Third Internationale is, for its part, still interested in Indo-China, as evidenced by statements of the leaders in July, 1935. Propaganda is being directed by Moscow's *Bureau*

*d'Orient*, whose headquarters are at Longtcheou, near the Tonkin frontier. Arrests have been made in the Cao-Bang region during 1935-6, and it is known that cells are re-forming in the North. It is probably only a question of time before a new attempt will be made, though there

has also been a marked liberalism in French policy and the depression has complicated the whole problem.

Ineffective organization, mismanagement of party funds, mutual jealousy on the part of leaders, who are perennially tending to split off and form new groups of their own, are minor and transient obstacles compared with the important communist-nationalist issue. Moscow and the Annamite extremists are unwilling to sanction any form of bourgeois-nationalist government, even provisionally, whereas the mass of the Annamites are stirred to patriotism only by appeals couched in terms of ownership of the soil.

Nationalism is undeniably the Occident's gift to Indo-China. It is the sole creative indigenous movement to which contact with a Western nation has given birth. Without the leaven of nationalism the Annamites reaction to the French conquest might have degenerated into a